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ABSTRACT

A common misconception about gangs is that they resemble past images of motorcycle riders. Society is now faced with what are called "hybrid" gangs whose members are usually 14 to 16 years of age, who dress conservatively, who display subtle gang identifiers, and who are motivated by a combination of profit and poor family life. This booklet contains information to help teachers identify gang members and gang activities on their campus. The first step to solving gang problems is to be aware that they do exist. Teachers are essential to gang intervention and prevention because of the amount of time children spend in the classroom each day. Some of these students can be saved from a life of crime if they are diverted from gang activities at an early age. Some of the topics covered in this booklet are definitions; types of gangs; gang awareness in the classroom; gang attire, tattoos, graffiti, and hand signals; and language. Further discussion is offered on why kids join gangs and the various types of gangs present in society, such as delinquent youth-gangs, traditional turf-based gangs, gain-oriented gangs, and violent/hate gangs. Finally, suggestions are given as to what schools can do to limit gang activities. (RJM)

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ED 398 500

National Consortium on Alternatives for Youth at Risk, Inc.
5250 17th Street, Suite 107 / Sarasota, Florida 34235-8247 / (941) 378-4793

I-79

"Working Together to Erase Gangs in Our Schools"

This Green Sheet is entitled "Working Together to Erase Gangs in Our Schools" but the information could be used in any location.

This week we have received two publications that include statistics and prevention programs which are up-to-date on all aspects of juvenile violence and include the issue of juvenile gangs. Both of these can be obtained at no cost from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, POB 6000, Rockville, Md., 20849-6000. Phone: 800-638-8736 to order.

In Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report: (August 1995) No national level data are collected on the number of gangs or gang members, the juvenile proportion of gang members or the volume of gang crime. Striking differences occur in identifying gangs and gang members. In 1992 a survey of 100 jurisdictions estimated 250,000 adults and juveniles in 5,000 gangs. The ethnicity of gang members were estimated to be 48% African-American, 43% Hispanic, 5% Asian and about 4% White. About 6% of gang members are female who had a higher proportion of property offenses than males who committed more violent crimes. Twenty-five per cent of students in a 1989 survey reported gangs in their schools and were twice as likely to fear attack in school and going to and from school in comparison to those with no gangs.

In Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders (June, 1995): Four gang prevention programs are evaluated in detail with the results that broad-scale prevention approaches are likely to be less effective than targeting high-risk youth groups and applying approriate deterrent and rehabilitative procedures.

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INTRODUCTION

The Northeast Gang Task Force is comprised of representatives from the Hurst, Euless and Bedford Police Departments. The task force was created in 1991 to combat the increasing gang problem in these communities. Current efforts are focused primarily on gathering intelligence information and educating department members, citizens and educators.

This booklet contains information that has been designed to help teachers identify gang members and gang activities on their campus. The first step to solving these problems is to be aware that they do exist. Research shows that gangs have been present in our area for many years, and their membership continues to grow at an alarming rate.

Teachers are essential to gang intervention and prevention, because of the amount of time children spend in the classroom each day. Teachers have the opportunity to observe students for long periods of time and are aware of patterns they develop. Some of these children can be saved from a life of crime if they are diverted from gang activities at an early age.

"Nosotros Unidos" is a multicultural gang diversion program that deals specifically with gang members once they have been identified. Counselors are on staff to provide one-on-one and group therapy to these individuals. Our task force works closely with this organization to educate these young people on the adverse affects gang membership can have on their lives.

Together we can make a difference. Once we have admitted that a problem does exist, we can take steps to eliminate it. Please review the enclosed information carefully, and advise school administration staff or task force members of any questions or concerns you have.

NORTHEAST GANG TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

DeeAnna Looney, Hurst Police Department.....	485-1450
Mike Brown, Euless Police Department.....	685-1553
Larry Romines, Bedford Police Department.....	952-2434
Terry Craig, Nosotros Unidos.....	425-3593

TODAY'S GANGS

Today we are faced with what are called the "hybrid" gangs of the late 1980's and the 1990's. A common misconception is that today's gang members resemble motorcycle riders or a "cholo". In reality, modern members are usually 14 to 16 years of age, dress conservatively and display subtle gang identifiers.

Colored shoelaces, ball caps with sports logos, certain jackets, and colored bandannas are typical gang attire. No single identifier can make a person a gang member. Other factors such as associates and hand signs must also be considered.

Gangs today are motivated by a combination of profit and a less than satisfactory family life. The young gang member has a feeling of belonging as he relates to his fellow members. Being in a gang can also provide the young male with sexual gratification he cannot get outside the gang.

History shows that a person belonging to a gang feels he is part of an organization that not only shocks society, but gains profit from illegal activities. This trend is evident today as young gang members graduate from spraying paint on walls to criminal mischief and car theft. Some gang members go beyond basic crimes against property and instead focus on the more serious crimes against persons.

On April 2, 1992, a capital murder of a Bedford resident was committed by three members of a local "Hoova Crips" gang while in the course of a burglary. The members slit the throat of the female occupant in the house with a butcher knife they had brought with them to the scene. These individuals had been tracked for well over a year by Hurst, Euless and Bedford officers.

D/FW Airport has not been excluded from gang activity. Gangs have been known to steal cars from remote parking areas and use the vehicles in drive-by shootings. The airport's 24-hour a day access, vast size, and limited monitorability makes it a likely target for this type of offense.

Today's gang problem has been compared to the golden age of the Mafia with drug trafficking being the driving force behind gang activity. Memberships tend to cross ethnic lines and have more female involvement than ever before.

LANGUAGE

Examples

- Crip gangs will use the letter "C" to replace the letter "B" in conversations and writings because of their rival - the Bloods. Writing usually consists of Olde English Script.

- Crips refer to fellow members as "Cuz" and call Bloods "Slobs." Refer to themselves as "BK" or Blood Killers.

- Blood gangs will substitute the letter "B" for the letter "C" in conversations and writings. These gangs also use Olde English Script.

- Bloods refer to each other as "Blood" and call Crip members "Crabs."

It is important for teachers to be aware of student's verbal language as well as their body language. Abbreviations used in conversations may be a way for juveniles to talk about gang activities without fearing interpretation from adults.

Example: "BGD" Black Gangster Disciples

TERMINOLOGY

Latino Gangs		Afro-American Gangs	
"Going Down"	fighting	"Gig"	gathering
"Check-In"	initiation	"Squab"	fight
"Chola/Cholo"	girl/boy in Gang	"Holdin' Down"	controlling
"Filero"	knife	"Let's Bail"	let's leave

WHY KIDS JOIN GANGS

- Poverty
- Fear
- Need to Protect Self or Family
- Need to Belong or be Recognized
- Low Self Esteem
- Cultural Expectations
- Avoidance of Rejection
- Intimidation
- Too Much Unstructured, Non-Supervised Time
- Profit from Illegal Drug Trade
- Family Tradition
- Lack of Social Activity; "No Place to Go"
- Not Wanting to Feel Different
- Peer Pressure
- Lack of Religion, Value System, or Ethics Within Youth's Home
- Sense of Adventure
- Lack of Parental Interest and Support
- Self Deception
- Insecurity
- Lack of Education, Lack of Success in School, Dropping Out

GANG AWARENESS IN THE CLASSROOM

- Eliminate any preconceived notions you may have about gangs. Teachers have a responsibility to educate all students regardless of race, creed, or color. Accept all students with an open mind.

- Make your class a comfort zone for everyone who visits there (students and teachers). Learn to recognize and actively eliminate any and all signs of gang activity.

- Understand the most complex and numerous reasons students join gangs. Most are trying to satisfy a basic need to belong to a group and "fit in." They are also being subjected to strong peer pressure from friends or fellow classmates.

- Assert yourself with gang members in your classroom. Do not confront them, but instead deal with them on a one to one basis. Like all students, gang members will push you to the limit. Do not give them an arena for their misbehavior. If you "validate" their activities in front of other students, it will only encourage them to challenge your authority.

- Be aware of gang writing, attire and language in your classroom.

- If you believe that one or more of your students is in a gang or is moving towards joining one, submit his or her name to your campus coordinator for review. It is not our objective to punish these students, but instead we want to deter them from criminal activity by showing them the negative consequences of gang membership.

- Awareness is the key to helping young people stay away from gangs. Once gang problems have been identified, they can be dealt with effectively by everyone concerned.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1. The showing of "colors." Groups of students wearing identical or similar outfits.

2. Graffiti in the neighborhood or on the school campus.

3. The use of hand signals, also known as "flashing," down the hallways, etc.

4. An increase of physical confrontations or "staredowns" or reports of students being harassed or assaulted by small groups of students.

5. Students wearing beepers/pagers or carrying cellular telephones.

6. The presence of gang markings or tattoos on a student's hands, arms or notebooks and book covers.

7. The use and distribution of drugs on campus. Early drug involvement by younger students.

8. School failure: Grades and Conduct.

9. Limited or no involvement in extra-curricular activities.

ATTIRE

- CAPS: notice the way they are worn and any monikers that are printed on the front or side of the ball cap; look for sports logos displayed on cap - especially if they have been altered in some way

- COATS: look for jackets with sports logos such as the L.A. Raiders; colors, insignias and patches; long black trench coats

- SHOES: look for painted soles and colored shoe laces; "Doc Martin" style combat boots

- T-SHIRTS: notice graffiti and/or monikers

- COLORS: BLUE (Crips), RED (Bloods), and BLACK - used by Hispanic gangs to cover other gang graffiti; also notice students wearing all of the same color - such as black shirt, pants, shoes, etc.

- BANDANNAS: RED and BLUE on person or hanging from rearview mirror of vehicle

- CLOTHING: designer name clothing worn together with other identifiers stated above; "sagging" pants worn low around the hips; overalls with one shoulder unfastened

TATTOOS

- May be viewed as an extension of gang graffiti and will usually include the name, initials or gang symbols followed by the street name of the member.

- Many tattoos are homemade and are not confined to any particular part of the body.

- May not be the typical artwork associated with tattoos, but may be instead an identifiable mark such as a cigarette burn.

GRAFFITI

- Graffiti is often the first sign of gang infiltration into a neighborhood.

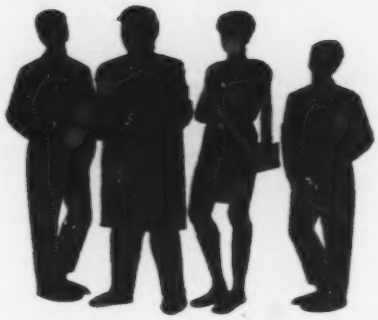
- Is used to identify territorial boundaries.

- The order of the names written in graffiti often signifies who is considered the top members and leaders of the gang.

- Graffiti can appear on clothes, papers or notebooks and not just spray painted on walls.

HAND SIGNALS

- Hand signs will not only identify set gang members, but will display his rank in the gang as well as his knowledge of the gang's history.



STREET GANG DEFINITION

Three or more persons having a common identifying sign or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities.

REGULAR GANG MEMBER

Those individuals who "hang out" with the gang on a more or less daily basis. They are familiar with and are aware of most gang activities. They are likely to be present during gang offenses, frequently as a participant.

ASSOCIATE GANG MEMBERS

Those individuals who are friends, acquaintances, and relatives of gang members who are somewhat knowledgeable about gang activities and occasionally participate.

JUNIOR GANG MEMBERS

Those aspiring individuals who are too young to be fully accepted by the gang and those individuals who are particularly at risk of developing a more serious level of gang activity. Junior members may be used to commit offenses in an effort to insulate gang leadership from the consequences of crime. These impressionable juveniles can easily be talked into doing almost anything if it will gain them acceptance by the gang.

TYPES OF GANGS

DELINQUENT YOUTH GANGS

This is a loosely structured group of young people who "hang out" together. The group has a name, and members typically have developed identifying signs such as a similar clothing style, colors, and/or hand signs. Members engage in delinquent or undesirable behavior often enough to attract negative attention from law enforcement, neighborhood residents and school officials.

TRADITIONAL TURF-BASED GANG

This is a loosely structured, named group with a strong commitment to defending its reputation and status as a gang. It is usually associated with a geographic territory but may simply defend its perceived interests against rival gangs. Members include juveniles, as well as adults, who typically mark their turf with graffiti. Gang activities often include assault, homicide or drive-by shootings against rival gangs.

GAIN-ORIENTED GANG

This is a loosely structured, named local group of young people (juveniles and/or adults) who repeatedly engage in criminal activities for economic gain such as robbery, burglary, or selling controlled substances. The group may share many characteristics of turf-based gangs and may defend a territory, but should be classified as a gain-oriented gang when they act together for economic profit.

VIOLENT/HATE GANG

This is a named group of juveniles and/or adults that does not qualify as either a gain-oriented or a traditional turf-based gang. Typically, the group has developed identifying signs such as a style of dress, haircut, or insignia. The group's violence has an ideological or religious rationale, such as racism or satanism. This type also includes groups whose members are randomly or senselessly violent.

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

1. Listen to what students have to say about gangs in their area.

2. Ensure that communication lines are open and accessible to students at all times.

3. Help with graffiti clean-up efforts and remember the three R's:

   - Report
   - Record
   - Remove

4. Establish linkage with parents, community officials and police agencies.

5. Establish and enforce a consistent discipline management system that stresses the unacceptability of gang behavior.

6. Establish a dress code that supports school spirit.

7. Train teachers and staff to recognize gangs and deal properly with gang issues.

8. Investigate any rumors you hear from students of anticipated gang activities.

9. Provide parent education in conjunction with P.T.A. to educate parents about gang activity.

10. Use art, music and drama activities to promote positive alternatives to gang involvement.

11. Create a positive environment in the classroom and develop programs to foster student's success at different levels.

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